



Trail Markings

GVTA newsletter

Summer 2021

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Update from the Board

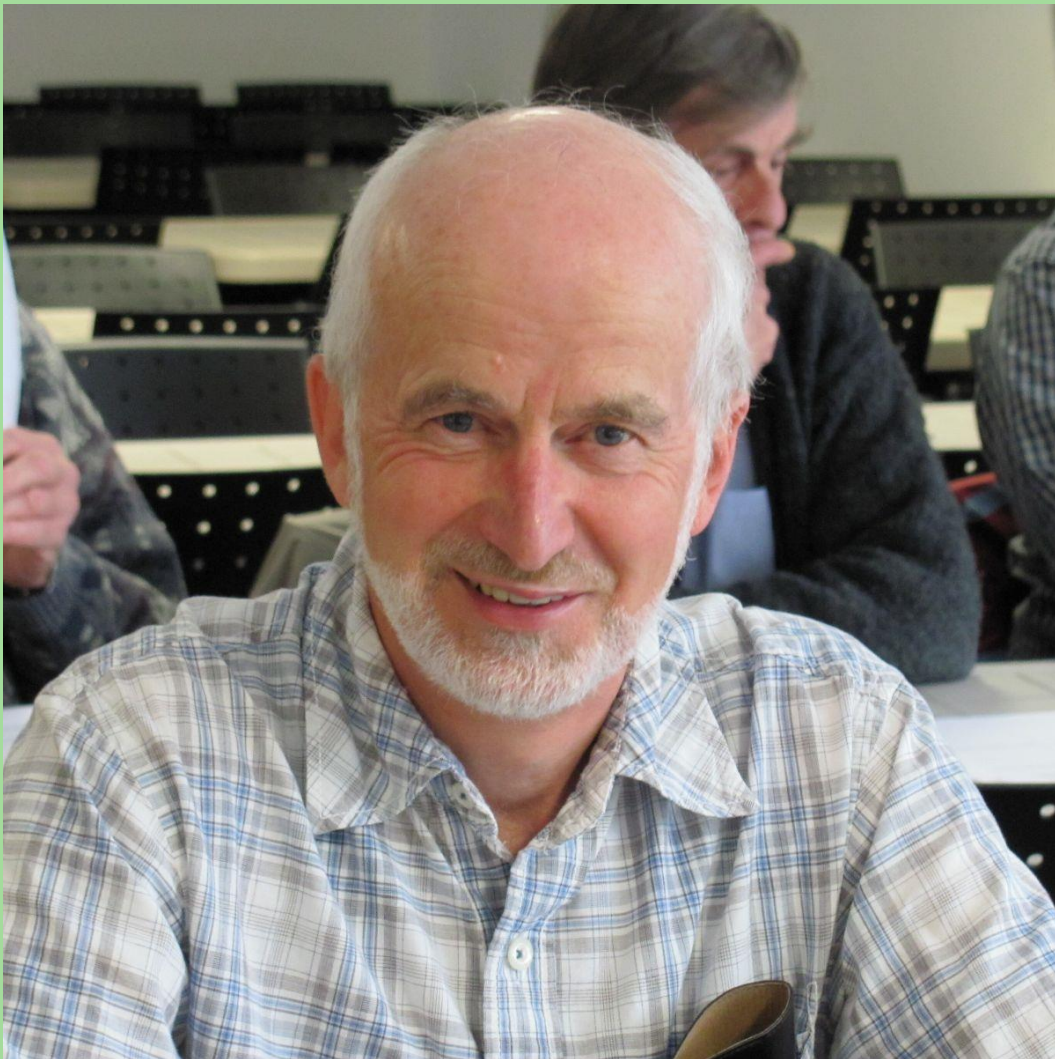
by Annie Côté-Kennedy

Thank you to all who were able to join us for our virtual Annual General Meeting held earlier this month. It was encouraging to “see” so many of you and to know that we continue to have your support despite these very challenging times. The Board presented at the AGM an overview of its activities for the past year. See the [GVTA Directors' Consolidated Report June 2021](#) for the full report. Below are highlights:

- To prepare for the return to organized hiking, five new hike leaders were added to the club's roster of certified hike leaders.
- A thorough audit of the trail was completed in the fall of 2020. The audit together with ongoing trail maintenance, involved some 50 volunteers. The board delivered GVTA-branded tuques to each of the volunteers in appreciation for their efforts.
- Important trail maintenance roles were filled in the past year: Vice-President, Trail Maintenance, new trail directors for each of Black Walnut and Carolinian Crest sections. As well, three new trail captains were appointed in the Pinnacle and Carolinian Crest sections.
- A food drive was organized and raised \$611 and 680 pounds of food or the equivalent of 2,365 meals for local Food Banks.
- The club offered members a three-part virtual series featuring guest speakers on various topics over three months in March, April and May.
- Regular communications with members and potential members were maintained through the quarterly newsletter and an active Facebook page.
- A maintenance agreement was completed with Woolwich Township and an agreement with Ruthven National Historic site is in the final stages of completion. As well, the Board appealed to Grand River Conservation Authority and its board of directors to maintain the trail in the Elora Gorge Conservation area. A resolution is expected on this issue later in June.
- A detailed review and revision to all the hiking program policies in the policy manual was completed in 2020. This review is the first of an ongoing series of steps to review and update the club's entire manual.
- The Board made the difficult decision to shorten the trail at Belwood, effectively closing the section from Belwood to Alton. As a result of the trail now terminating at Belwood, we can disregard Maps 15 and 16 in the Guidebook. Ondago app will be updated shortly.

- The Board entered a third year agreement with ONDAGO, an online map application provider, thereby ensuring ongoing access to up-to-date online maps of all Grand Valley Trail.

An Honorary Lifetime Member award was presented to Nick Kuret by the GVTA for his outstanding contribution to the Grand Valley Trails.



Nick Kuret has been a member and volunteer with the club for more than 30 years. He has served in a range of roles with the club: as Trail Director for Black Walnut, trail captain for a section of the Black Walnut. He was a construction crew leader for 17 years. He has provided consultation on various trail projects including the Middlebrook Road in the Pinnacle Section, the Ruthven Historic site in the Towpath section and work in Woolwich Township. Members at the AGM unanimously supported this seldom-presented award to such an outstanding trail supporter and advocate. Thank you Nick! And thank you to Anita for being such a supportive partner!

Introducing Board members for the 2021-22 year

President :	Annie Côté-Kennedy
Vice President, Trail Maintenance :	Jason Thompson
Treasurer :	Laura Anders
Director, Membership and Volunteering :	Emily Bennett
Director, Marketing :	Heather Rennie
Director, Programs:	Mary-Ellen Currie
Secretary:	Erin Huston
Director, Hikes:	Petra Suffling
Hike Ontario representative :	Charles Whitlock

Planning for the upcoming year

The board will be meeting in July to set out its objectives for the upcoming year, including the 50th anniversary celebration. Your ideas, suggestions and feedback are important to us! Please contact any of the board members or drop me an email at president@gvtra.on.ca to contribute your ideas or share your comments.

Wishing you a great summer and many enjoyable hikes!

[Volunteering for GVTA's 50th Anniversary](#)

by Emily Bennett

In this issue of Trail Markings, I wanted to start the conversation about planning for GVTA's 50th Anniversary which occurs next year in 2022. We have so many things to celebrate in our association and want to ensure that we capture a variety of activities that will appeal to our members and their families.

The Board has started a 'Year of Celebratory events" calendar for 2022 where we have created different activities to celebrate hiking, trail maintenance and volunteering. Examples include: Photo Contest to tie into National Photography Day, and family hikes on Family Day. We also have some special events planned that will be revealed at a later date.

We are calling upon our membership and volunteers to help in the planning and execution of the various events. One of our goals is to have some of the events run concurrently in all trail sections (for example, creating neighbourhood trail cleanup events on Earth Day) and that takes many hands!

If you like to take photos, plan events (party planning anyone?), do workshops or presentations, like to keep track of things, or want to help out with one or more event, send an email to volunteering@gvta.on.ca. All planned events will adhere to any or all public health guidelines.

Help us make this anniversary memorable!

We are also always looking for Trail Maintenance volunteers. If you would be interested in helping out, please send an email to volunteering@gvta.on.ca. Thanks!

Summertime Pleasures and Hazards on the Trail

-by Anita Smith

Hiking along the Grand River the other day I had the immense joy of watching my first river otter! As it swam through the water it created a wake. A Great Blue Heron wading near the bank turned around to keep a closer eye on the approaching mammal. The otter passed by the heron uneventfully and made its way to a large rock on shore. It sat there briefly, taking in its surroundings, and then jumped back into the water, splashing and playfully carrying on. The heron gave up on fishing and took flight.



While enjoying happy surprises, being aware of a few local hazardous plants would be prudent as well. As I was pointing out a little frog to my grandchildren, my hand brushed against a small plant no more than 4 inches tall. Almost immediately my hand started to sting. Luckily Stinging Nettle (above left) pain only lasts for a few minutes, but the discomfort is real. I am used to seeing the taller plants but this young one caught me off guard. Poison Ivy (above right) is another plant that many people react to when coming into contact with it. Some can even react to the ivy's oils carried on a dog's fur!



A third hazard that may be found in our area is the Giant Hogweed (above). It usually grows in wetter areas, such as along rivers and near ponds. Its thick bright green stem (3-8 cm diameter) with dark reddish-purple spots and coarse white hairs at the base of the leaf stock, along with its incredible size (often 2m+) make it very noticeable. Its sap is phototoxic which means if you get some on your skin and then expose that skin to sunlight it will cause a painful, blistering reaction. It is always best to leave plants as you found them. As the old adage says, "Take nothing but photos and leave nothing but footprints." Carefully staying on marked paths is the best way to avoid any mishaps.

Such are the wondrous surprises that await patient hikers who carefully take in the view along the Grand Valley Trails. When you are out there, say hello to fellow hikers, stay on the trail to avoid hazards and keep safe. Please make sure you are aware of and always follow the [Trail User's Code](#)! This includes carrying out litter, keeping dogs on leash, using stiles, and obeying all signage. We are so fortunate to have this 250km trail in our backyard, so to protect this wonderful gem, we need to follow the rules. We thank the kind landowners willing to share their properties and we thank our many volunteers willing to monitor and maintain the trails.

*Hiking is not escapism; it's realism.
The people who choose to spend time outdoors
are not running away from anything;
we are returning to where we belong.*

-Jennifer Pharr Davis